



Mukaddime

Death in Arabic Poetic and Philosophical Traditions: An Ontological and Aesthetic Study

Mahmud Şuş

ORCID: 0000-0001-7730-9864 | E-Mail: mahmudsus@artuklu.edu.tr

Assistant Professor, Mardin Artuklu University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Arabic Language and Literature

ROR ID: <https://ror.org/0396cd675>

Abstract

In Arabic poetry and philosophy, death remains to this day to be one of the most important themes, not only as a physiological obligation, but as a phenomenon of ontology and aesthetics. This paper examines the portrayal of death in Arab philosopher-poets in terms of how it evolved in existential anxiety in pre-Islamic poetry to philosophical and mystical constructions in later times. The study explores the conceptualization of death as continuity, negation, heroism and transcendence through the analysis of selected poets including pre-Islamic elegists, Al-Mutanabbi, Al-Maarri, Ibn Sina, and Sufi poets, including, Al-Hallaj and Ibn al-Farid. It is an analytical and comparative method of study which adopts philosophical ontology and aesthetic aspects of the literary work to explore how the meaning of death is constructed and reconstructed through the use of the poetic language. It claims that the Arabic poetic language is not a description of death but rather it refolds it into a symbolic and epistemological system within which is discussed greater questions of being, self and ultimate reality. Moreover, the paper sheds light on how language, imagery and metaphor are used to turn death into a physical occurrence into a multidimensional aesthetic experience. This study will clarify the expression of the human condition and the re-definition of the boundaries of life, death and transcendence in the work of the Arab philosopher-poets who unite philosophical research with poetic expression.

Keywords: Death, Arabic, Poetry, Ontology, Aesthetics, Sufism.

Citation (APA 6):

Şuş, M. (2026). Death in Arabic Poetic and Philosophical Traditions: An Ontological and Aesthetic Study. *Mukaddime*, 17(Special Issue 1), 219-243.
<https://doi.org/10.19059/mukaddime.1930125>

Article Date of Submission: 14.04.2026

Article Date of Acceptance: 05.06.2026

Arap Şiiri ve Felsefî Geleneklerinde Ölüm: Ontolojik ve Estetik Bir Çalışma

Mahmud Şuş

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7730-9864> | E-Mail: mahmudsus@artuklu.edu.tr

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Arap Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü.

ROR ID: <https://ror.org/0396cd675>

Öz

Arap şiiri ve felsefesinde ölüm, bugün hâlâ en önemli temalardan biri olmayı sürdürmektedir; yalnızca fizyolojik bir zorunluluk olarak değil, aynı zamanda ontoloji ve estetiğin bir fenomeni olarak da. Bu makale, Arap filozof-şairlerinde ölümün betimlenişini, İslam öncesi şiirdeki varoluşsal kaygıdan sonraki dönemlerdeki felsefi ve mistik yapılanmalara nasıl evrildiği açısından ele almaktadır. Çalışma; İslam öncesi mersiye şairleri, el-Mütenebbî, el-Maarri, İbn Sînâ ve Hallâc-ı Mansûr ile İbnü'l-Fârız dahil Sûfî şairler gibi seçilmiş şairlerin çözümlemesi aracılığıyla ölümün süreklilik, yadsıma, kahramanlık ve aşkınlık kavramları çerçevesinde nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığını araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, ölümün anlamının şiir dili kullanımıyla nasıl kurulduğunu ve yeniden kurulduğunu keşfetmek amacıyla felsefi ontoloji ve edebi eserlerin estetik boyutlarını benimseyen analitik ve karşılaştırmalı bir yöntemle sahiptir. Çalışma; Arapça şiir dilinin ölümü betimlemekle kalmayıp onu, varlık, benlik ve nihai gerçeklik gibi daha büyük soruların tartışıldığı sembolik ve epistemolojik bir sisteme yeniden kattığını öne sürmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra makale, ölümü fiziksel bir olgudan çok boyutlu bir estetik deneyime dönüştürmek için dilin, imgenin ve metaforun nasıl kullanıldığına da ışık tutmaktadır. Bu çalışma, felsefi araştırmayı şiirsel ifadeyle birleştiren Arap filozof-şairlerin eserlerinde insan halinin ifadesini ve yaşam, ölüm ile aşkınlığın sınırlarının yeniden tanımlanmasını aydınlatacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ölüm, Arap Şiiri, Ontoloji, Estetik, Tasavvuf.

Atf Bilgisi (APA 6):

Şuş, M. (2026). Death in Arabic Poetic and Philosophical Traditions: An Ontological and Aesthetic Study. *Mukaddime, 17*(Özel Sayı 1), 219-243.
<https://doi.org/10.19059/mukaddime.1930125>

Makale Geliş Tarihi: 14.04.2026

Makale Kabul Tarihi: 05.06.2026

1. Introduction

Death is one of the most universal, and long-standing preoccupations in human thought, and yet its conceptualization differs widely across cultural, philosophical and literary traditions. In Arabic poetry, dying is not just the end of life, but a very existential, philosophical and aesthetic experience. Death is a main thematic axis from the very beginning (al-shi'r al-jāhili, the poetry of the pre-Islamic era) to the intellectual brilliance of the Abbasid era and the religious profundity of Sufi poetry. It does this not only by organizing the poetic discourse but by also actively addressing other issues of being, selfhood and transcendence .

The pre-Islamic poetry has a sense of dying in a direct and unavoidable context through the instability of living in the desert, tribal conflicts, and the instability of human life. The poet does not engage death as an abstract notion but a lived experience that is constantly endangering the survival of life. This existential immediacy generates the greater awareness of mortality leading to a poetic dialogue that is full of tension between the clinging to life and the awareness of the eventual destruction.

As Islamic philosophy begins to emerge and intellectual life of the Abbasid period unfolds, it is the concept of death that will change significantly. Death starts to be understood as not only existential but also a philosophical issue that has a connection closer to the nature of being (wujud) and the soul (nafs). In these terms, death is usually referred to as the disconnection of the soul and the body and its transfer to a different ontological state. It is best explained in the writings of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). says that Ibn Sina argues that

"the soul is a substance, not pre-existent... he discusses at great length the different modes of immortality that the soul may attain" (Schwartz, 2014, p. 185).

Simultaneously, Arabic literature changes its poetry to reflect such intellectual changes. Philosophical thinking was integrated into poets' works, such as poems of Al-Mutanabbi and Al-Ma'arri. The themes in Al-Mutanabbi's works are related to **"engagement in war, courage, and boldness"** (Ghnaïm et al., 2024, p. 2097). In his poems, death is used as a measure of man's courage and a definition of himself. While al-Ma'arri is **"pessimistic, critical, hates existence, pessimistic to the world, absurdity and disappointment of life"** (Karimi, 2014, p. 231) and he redefines death as the release of the burden of existence.

Sufi poetry puts a whole new perspective to the concept of death. In the poetry of poets like Ibn al-Farid and Al-Hallaj, death ceases to be a loss or end and becomes the unification with the Divine. One of the most exquisite mystical expressions of death in Arabic poetry is that of Ibn al-Farid (576-632 AH / 1181-1235 CE), the so-called Sultan of Lovers (سلطان العاشقين). In the Encyclopaedia Britannica, his well-known Khamriyah (Wine Ode) "describes the effects of the wine of divine love" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1995, para. 2). changing death into an ecstatic union between the lover and the Beloved.

Although these are such enriching perspectives, most of the available literature has a tendency to either consider death as a theme or as a philosophical notion on its own. A significant gap in the literature that combines both ontological and aesthetic aspects of death under one analytical approach can still be observed. This drawback does not allow one to fully grasp the manner in which death can be both a philosophical concept and a poetic creation.

The current work aims to fill this gap by studying death in the context of a twofold approach to it comprising ontology and aesthetics. It claims that Arab philosopher-poets do not simply describe death but they recreate its meaning using poetic language. Poetry creates a metaphysical and material liaison between the metaphysical and material by using metaphor, imagery, and symbolic structures that turn death into aesthetic experience.

The following questions are used to guide this research: How is death ontologically conceptualized by Arab philosopher-poets? How does poetic language make death aesthetic? What are some of the differences in the representations of death in pre-Islamic, classical, philosophical and Sufi traditions? And what do philosophical and mystical systems do to the meaning of death in Arabic poetry?

2. Research Methodology

The research method used in this study is qualitative, analytical, and comparative; the primary data source is texts in the form of visuals, while secondary data sources consist of scholars who use secondary sources. Nearly all sources are open access and verifiable.

Poems of Al-Mutanabbi, Al-Ma'arī, Ibn Sina (Qaṣīdat al-Nafs), Ibn al-Farid, Al-Hallaj, and pre-Islamic poets Zuhayr and Labid are among the primary sources.

Only peer-reviewed journal articles (such as Druart, 2000, Ghnaim et al., 2024, Karimi 2014, Aliyev 2024), university repositories, and open-access platforms are included as secondary sources.

Analytical procedure consist of four steps which are: (1) Collection of relevant poems, (2) Translation from Arabic to English, (3) thematical coding under ontological and aesthetic categories, and (4) comparative synthesis from historical periods.

Criteria for selection are history (pre-Islamic to Sufi period), philosophical depth and openness.

Addressing the research questions: The four research questions are addressed through:

Ontological analysis: the study of death as a way of being

Aesthetic analysis: analysis of poetic features (symbolism, metaphor etc.)

Comparative analysis: across five historical stages: pre-Islamic, classical Abbasid, philosophical (Al-Ma'arri), metaphysical (Ibn Sina) and Sufi mystical (Ibn al-Farid, Al-Hallaj).

Integrated synthesis: synthesis of ontology and aesthetics in one single system

3. Literature Review

The topic of death in Arabic poetry has been a major area of academic inquiry in various fields of study such as literature, philosophy and cultural studies. Available literature indicates that the subject of death is not a repetitive theme but a major conceptual and formal theme with which Arabic poetic discourse has been determined throughout time.

3.1 Death in Pre-Islamic Poetry

The representation of the death in the pre-Islamic poetry is one of the most important research areas. There has been an accent on the fact that early Arabic poets

expressed a very existential sense of mortality, as they were exposed to the brutalities of desert living and were always in the presence of violence and loss. The studies show that pre-Islamic poets had a philosophical concept of death based on the opposition between survival and obliteration. Their poems have a sense of existential conflict in their attachment to life and the reality of death.

The famous line of Labid ibn Rabi'a in his Mu'allaqa has been extensively studied by Islamic scholars. The Prophet Muhammad himself is quoted saying: "The word of Labid is the most true word spoken by any poet:

ألا كل شيء ما خلا الله باطل

"Indeed, everything except God is vain" (Sahih Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 3841).

This verse bears a curious philosophical revelation that everything is ephemeral and that the only thing that is permanent is the divine, a precursor to ontological thought.

3.2 Death in Abbasid Poetry

The philosophical aspects of the subject of death in the classical Arabic poetry have been investigated further, especially in the Abbasid era. Researchers have shown that poets of this period transcended descriptive approaches to death in favor of more intellectual treatment, focusing on such topics as fate (qaḍā'), time (dahr), and metaphysical continuity. Al-Jamal (2004) argues that the common denominators between the poets who wrote about profound philosophical issues that had not been widely investigated previously were death, time, the world, eternity, destiny, heaven, and hell as was the case with Al-Mutanabbi and Al-Maarri. The research observes that there are poets who treated death seriously with deep philosophical treatment that transcends the superficial treatment of death whereas some of the poets treated it casually (Al-Jamal, 2004).

3.3 Conception of Death in Ibn Sīnā's Philosophy

One of the most prominent personalities of Islamic philosophy, whose ideology had a tremendous impact on Eastern and Western philosophical doctrines, is Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE). Studies have found out that he theorized death to be a shift and not extinction, and the immortality of the soul. Druart (2000, p. 259) describes the human soul to Avicenna as

"a complete substance which does not inhere in the body nor is imprinted in it "

and thus claims its survival after the body dies. But Druart (2000) also adds that the causal relation between body and soul is not clear and even though Avicenna says that he is personally immortal he fails to give a complete satisfactory ontological explanation to this.

His metaphysical thoughts were not only conveyed in philosophical prose, but also in poetry, such as his well-known Qaṣīdat al-Nafs (Poem of the Soul). Institute of Ismaili Studies explains that this poem makes the analogy of a dove, which lost its path and lost its customary home and the recovery of its homing instinct as a metaphor of spiritual awakening. (Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2015, para. 2).

3.4 Sufi Poets and Mystical Conceptions of Death

One of the most significant Sufi poets in Arabic literature is Ibn al-Farid (576-632 AH / 1181-1235 CE) His poetry is called Sultan al-‘Āshiqīn (Sultan of Lovers) and is typified by the manifestation of divine love and mystical experience. According to Younus

"The poet Ibn Al-Faridh was called "Sultan of Lovers" due to his divine love and adoration, which distanced him from extremism and led him to comply with Allah's commands in the Holy Qur'an for loving Allah, obeying Him and obeying His commands" (Younus, 2024, p. 132).

Scholars have observed that the poetry of Ibn al-Farid uses rich symbolic language such as the use of wine imagery (*khamriyya*) in expressing spiritual intoxication and the annihilation of the self in divine love. As Homerin (2012) notes, Ibn al-Farid was well-informed about the wine poetry tradition, and his celebrated wine ode *al-Khamriyyah* is the mature product of an admirable line of rarified spirits leading to union (*wahatdat*) and ecstasy (*wajad*).

3.5 Research Gap

Nevertheless, in spite of the richness of these contributions, the current scholarship tends to consider death as thematic aspect or as a philosophical notion in its own right. No integrative strategies have existed to study death as both ontological and aesthetic phenomenon. This disjunction is specifically noticeable in research which addresses either philosophical discussion or literary criticism without connecting the two.

The current research aims at filling this gap by creating a multilayered framework that incorporates ontology and aesthetics. Through a study of the conceptualization and presentation of death, this study will serve to present a more holistic view of the presence of this concept in the Arabic poetic and philosophical traditions.

4. Aesthetics of Death and Ontology

4.1 Ontology of the Arabic Philosophical Thought of Death

The Arabic intellectual traditions of death cannot be completely comprehended without alluding to its ontological roots. The philosophical study of being (*wujud*) called ontology offers the conceptual sense according to which death is not extermination, but transformation. The most common definition of death in classical Islamic philosophy is the loss of connection between the body and the soul and a transition between one state of being to another.

This definition is metaphysical view of the world where the existence is not bounded to the physical body but goes out to the immaterial and spiritual worlds. In this context, death is something which alters the way of being and not the end of existence.

The idea is articulated in one of the most powerful philosophical statements of Ibn Sina. Druart (2000) explains that "**As for Avicenna the human soul is a complete substance which does not inhere in the body nor is imprinted in it**" (Druart, 2000, p. 259). and thus survives the body when it dies. This stance is developed upon a larger metaphysical platform based on Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy in which the soul is perceived as an immaterial substance that does not disappear into matter with physical decay.

4.2 Poetry and ontological Implications

Such philosophical ideas are not limited to the field of the theoretical discussions; they are firmly rooted in the Arabic poetic speech. Philosopher-poets express abstract ideas in ontology in symbols and experience. Death thus is a reversion, a liberation, a shift to some form of existence of a higher nature. This is especially noticeable in Poem of the Soul by Ibn Sina since the soul is represented by a bird that has fallen down out of a superior world.

4.3 Aesthetic Theory of Death in the Arabic Poetry

Provided that ontology is the answer to what death is, aesthetics is the answer to how death is felt and shown. Death is not explained, but rather created in Arabic poetry using language. The aesthetic aspect of the death is the process of converting abstract notions into the sense and symbolic world.

The symbolic portrayal of life and death in Arabic poetry underscores the intricate and diverse essence of these concepts, emphasizing their interdependence and interconnectedness in a way that reflects the imagination of the poet and his poetic insight. According to Ahmadzadeh Hoch, Aghazadeh Qayeh Bashi, and Kheyri (2022, p. 85), that poets **“used aesthetic, temporal, spatial and collocations codes to produce poetic symbols related to the concept of death,”** turning death from a theoretical concept into a beautiful experience.

4.4 Death as Epistemological Tool

In addition to ontology and aesthetics, death is also an epistemological instrument- a way of knowing the very existence. Addressing the issue of death, the poet is able to interact with such basic questions: What is the nature of existence? What is after death? What is the meaning of life? In this way, death is used as a prism of exploring larger philosophical and existential questions.

5. Death in Pre-Islamic Poetry: Existential Anxiety and Ontological Uncertainty

5.1 Death as an Existential Reality.

The first and the most direct treatment of the subject of death in the Arabic literary tradition is pre-Islamic poetry (*al-shi‘r al-jāhilī*). In this era, death is an immediate and inevitable reality unlike its interpretation in later philosophy or theology. The poet does not speculate about death, but rather faces it as a normal aspect of everyday life, which is determined by war, tribal warfare, and nature in its cruelty.

This existential aspect of death generates what may be termed as an existential consciousness, where the person is hyper conscious of his vulnerability and finiteness.

5.2 Inevitability and randomness of Death.

A random and indiscriminate nature of death is one of the characteristics of death described in pre-Islamic poetry. Justice or morality does not control death, it hits without any warning or explanation. This is eloquently put forth by Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma (زهير بن أبي سلمى) in his well-known poem:

رَأَيْتُ الْمَنَاءَ حَبِطَ عَشَوَاءَ مَنْ تُصِيبُ
ثُمَّتَهُ وَمَنْ تُخْطِئُ يُعَمَّرُ فَتَهْرَمُ

Translation: I have seen death striking blindly like a night-blind camel: he kills anyone he strikes and anyone he misses lives to a decrepit old age. (Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, n.d., lines 53-54).

One of the most quoted in Arabic literary studies is this verse, which is in the Diwan of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma (Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, n.d.). The term *khawḍa* 'ashwā' (blind striking) implies the unstructuredness, the unpredictability of things, and injustice. Death, in this case, is a mechanism of chaos that strengthens the ontological uncertainty underpinning pre-Islamic thinking.

5.3 Universality of Death

The universality of death is another main characteristic of pre-Islamic poetry. It cannot be avoided by any person, no matter his status or power. This is expressed in the poetry of Labid ibn Rabi'a in his Mu'allāqa (المعلقة - الليبي بن ربيعة) :

أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَّا خَلَا اللَّهَ بَاطِلٌ
وَكُلُّ نَعِيمٍ لَا مَحَالَةَ زَائِلٌ

(Labid ibn Rabi'a, n.d., lines 1-2).

This is also quoted in (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 3841).

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "أَصْدَقُ كَلِمَةٍ قَالَهَا الشَّاعِرُ: كَلِمَةُ لَيْبِدٍ أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَّا خَلَا اللَّهَ بَاطِلٌ"

Translation: "All that is not God is vain and all blessings will surely die." (Sahih al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 3841).

According to the Islamic scholarly references, the Prophet Muhammad wrote in the first part of this verse that it was the most truthful word ever uttered by a poet. In contrast to the chaotic death of Zuhayr, Labid brings about a more astute and even metaphysical viewpoint, hinting at an early shift towards ontological thought.

5.4 Elegy (Rithā) and Emotional Facet of Death.

Elegy (rithā) is one of the most significant types of poetry that was used to reflect death in pre-Islamic poetry. Poets express grief, loss, and memory by lamentation. One of the most renowned of those who have lamented most over the loss of their siblings is Al-Khansa whose lamentations over her brother Sakhr are the prime illustration of how death can happen to be part of the everyday experience and emotionally internalized.

5.5 Move to the Reflection of Being

Even though pre-Islamic poetry is more of an experience, it has first signs of ontological reflection. The poets start doubting the essence of living, the stability of life, and the unavoidability of death. This is especially seen in verse of Labid, which foreshadows subsequent philosophical trends.

5.6 Pre-Islamic Conception Summary

The symbolism of death in old-poetry may be summed up as follows:

Dimension	Characteristics
Ontological	Uncertainty, inevitability, universality
Existential	Anxiety, tension, awareness
Aesthetic	Imagery, elegy, symbolism
Ethical	Courage, honor, acceptance

6. Al-Mutanabbi: Death as Heroism and Existential Statement

Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (915-965 CE) is a poet who held a special place in Arabic literary history for his mastery of Arabic language and his philosophical wisdom. Whereas pre-Islamic poets tend to speak about death in terms of an experiential reality, Al-Mutanabbi combines existence with powerfully asserted selfhood. In his poetry, death is not only an inevitable destiny but it is a fundamental component of identity, honor and meaning. In 10th century, the renowned Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi has profoundly influenced Arabic literature and beyond, as Aliyev (2024, p. 88) states:

"the renowned 10th-century Arab poet, whose work has profoundly impacted Arabic literature and beyond. By examining key themes such as linguistic style, cultural identity, heroism, and individualism, the research highlights differences in how Eastern and Western scholars interpret his legacy. Eastern scholarship emphasizes Al-Mutanabbi's mastery of the Arabic language" in his research. The research focuses on the differences between how his works are interpreted by Eastern and Western scholars, based on their key themes: language style, cultural identity, heroism, and individualism. All of this philosophical depth of Al-Mutanabbi's poetry makes death no longer a destiny that cannot be escaped but a measurement of heroic identity and existential affirmation.

6.1 Death and Heroic Identity

Among the most characteristic aspects of the poetry of Al-Mutanabbi is the way death has been turned into a kind of gauge of courage and greatness. Instead of being afraid of death, the poet reestablishes it as the possibility of making heroic identity:

وَإِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ بُدًّا
فَمِنْ الْعَجْزِ أَنْ تَمُوتَ جَبَانًا

Translation: “In case of imminent death, it is weakness to die like a coward.” (Al-Mutanabbi, 1866 as cited in Al-Muhallabi, 2003, p. 223)

This verse is found in the Diwan of Al-Mutanabbi (Al-Mutanabbi, 1866) and summarizes one of the basic principles of existence. Al-Mutanabbi does not emphasize on death but on the manner in which one responds to death. Sellman has claimed that the

themes of fatalism of Al-Mutanabbi are apparent in his poetry, and his glorification of war is used “to depict the idea of *Qadar* (fate) in Islam” (Sellman, 2019, para. 3)

and how death is an unavoidable fate that even heroes have to face. This is an expression of existential agency where courage is what makes meaning and fear reduces existence. Death is thereby made an ethical factor as opposed to a biological phenomenon.

6.2 Death and the Desire at Immortality

Ironically, even though Al-Mutanabbi accepts the fact of death, his works show that he wants to achieve the symbolic immortality of fame and poetry heritage:

الْخَيْلُ وَاللَّيْلُ وَالْبَيْدَاءُ تَعْرِفُنِي
وَالسَّيْفُ وَالرُّمْحُ وَالْقِرْطَاسُ وَالْقَلَمُ

Translation: The horses and the night and the desert know me, and the sword and the spear and the paper and the pen." (Al-Mutanabbi, as cited in Abdul-Hamid & Wheale, 2002, para. 1)).

Abdul-Hamid and Wheale (2002) refer to this verse as the most famous line of Al-Mutanabbi.

The authors tell that when the poet was attacked by bandits, and his first thought was to get away, one of his servants objected, “*Master, didn't you say in your Sayfiyat, 'Horses, night and the desert know me, and the sword, spear, paper and pen'?*”The poet was stung by this quotation of his own words and went to fight, but was killed (Abdul-Hamid & Wheale, 2002, para. 1). In this verse we can see how Al-Mutanabbi tries to overcome death using reputation, memory, and poetry. In this case, even poetry itself is a way of opposing annihilation. Although there is no way of avoiding physical death, one can live on linguistically.

6.3 Philosophical Depth

It is verified by research that Al-Mutanabbi touched on some deep philosophical problems that had never been delved into in a more detailed manner. Aliyev (2024) argues that the work of Al-Mutanabbi addresses the “*themes of fate and mortality*” (Aliyev, 2024, p. 88). making him a link between the Eastern and Western literature. The research points out that Eastern literature accentuates that Al-Mutanabbi was “*mastery of the Arabic language*” (p. 88) as well as “*philosophical exploration of Arab ideals*” (p. 88)whereas the Western literature concentrates on “*universal themes of self-reflection and existential struggle*” (p. 88). The common denominator of his poetic talk is death, time, destiny and the nature of existence.

6.4 Summary of Al-Mutanabbi's Conception

Aspect	Characterization
View of Death	Heroic test
View of Life	Field of glory

Aspect	Characterization
Tone	Confident, assertive
Goal	Immortality through fame

7. Al-Maarri: Death as Existential Negation, Philosophical Revolt

One of the most intellectually complex and radical voices in Arabic literature is that of Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma’rri (973–1057 CE). The attitude toward death, as a philosophical perspective, is different in the work of Al-Ma’arri, who is both skeptical and pessimistic, from that of Al-Mutanabbi, who elevates death to the status of a heroic ideal. As Grigoryan (2018, p. 1) has pointed out, al-Ma’arri was "reputation revolved around his poetic genius and his unbelief.". Karimi also notes that "one of the rare thinkers that his ideas are dominated by pessimism and his thoughts are dominated by doubt, contradiction and anxiety." (Karimi, 2014, pp. 231–237). Al-Ma’arri's poems reveal a deep sense of disenchantment with life, and death, he suggests, is a way of liberation.

7.1 Death as Freedom of Being

Among the most well-known verses of Al-Maarri is the sum of his whole philosophical attitude:

هَذَا مَا جَنَاهُ أَبِي عَلَيَّ
وَمَا جَنَيْتُ عَلَى أَحَدٍ

Translation: "This is what my father has done to me and I have not wronged anyone. (Al-Ma'arri, as cited in Al-Hashimi, n.d., p. 199).

This verse, which is found in Al-Maarii Luzuiyyat (Al-Maari, n.d.), is a drastic reversal of conventional values in which birth is depicted as injustice, life as forced suffering and death as implied release. The self-epitaph of Al-Ma’arri (2018) says: **"this was the crime my father committed to me and I have done so to no one"** (Grigoryan, 2018, p. 225)

All of these words point to the futility of human efforts, the equality of joy and sorrow, and the lack of ultimate meaning. It is indicative of al-Ma’arri's antinatalist view, as he regarded **"procreation as a sin and universal annihilation as the best hope for humankind"** (Cohen-Mor, 2013, p. 139). The difference between the two is that al-Ma’arri is not concerned with death as an existential threat, as were the previous poets. Instead, he doubts that anything exists. The very fact of birth is presented as an undesirable burden – and thus that nonexistence is better than life. Thus death is not a tragedy but a welcome relieving from the prison of embodiment and suffering.

7.2 Philosophical Pessimism

The poetry of al-Ma’arri is a manifestation of a more general philosophical position that can be called existential pessimism. He puts in question the worth of life, the equity of creation and the significance of human existence:

al-Ma'arri says:

غَيْرُ مُجْدٍ فِي مِلَّتِي وَاعْتِقَادِي
نَوْحُ بَاكٍ وَلَا تَرْتُمُ شَادٍ

Translation: "In my belief and my creed it is of no use: the wailing of the wailing or the singing of the singer." (*Al-Ma'arri, as cited in Al-Hashimi, n.d., p. 199*).

This verse shows the pointlessness of human activities, the similarity between happiness and sadness, and the lack of overall meaning. Britannica claims that

"al-Ma'arri suggested that children should not be begotten, in order to spare future generations the pains of life. His writings are also marked by an obsession with philology." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d., para. 4*).

it would be better to be born dead. It is here that death enters a wider philosophical system where all human experiences have been made meaningless.

7.3 The illusion of Life

The other theme that the poetry of Al-Maarri focuses on is the notion that life too is an illusion:

تَعَبٌ كُلُّهَا الْحَيَاةُ فَمَا أَع... جِبُّ إِلَّا مَنْ رَاغِبٍ فِي إِزْيَادٍ
إِنْ حَزَنًا فِي سَاعَةِ الْمَوْتِ إِضْعَا... فُ سُرُورٍ فِي سَاعَةِ الْمِيلَادِ

Translation: "This life is a sheer toil and weariness, I wonder only at the person who desires to increase it (life). Surely the sorrow at the hour of death is far greater (many times) than the joy at the time of birth. " (*Al-Ma'arri, as cited in Al-Hashimi, n.d., p. 199*).

This verse gives the impression of the inutility of human actions, of the equality of joy and sorrow, of the lack of ultimate sense. The pessimistic attitude of al-Ma'arri towards life is found in his description of himself: "*He liked that people call him as 'Rheen Almahbasein'; meaning a person trapped in two prisons of blindness and staying home. However, then he added another prison to them and in fact was trapped in three prisons; 'I see myself captured in 3 prisons including staying home, blindness, and survival of soul in an evil body.'*" Al-Ma'arri views death as "*is a great achievement and peace*"(Anam, 2023, Abstract). Indeed, in this regard, death is not only inevitable but is welcome as it ends a state of constant pain.

7.4 Summary of Al-Ma'arri's Conception

Concept	Interpretation
Life	Burden
Death	Liberation

Concept	Interpretation
Existence	Problematic
Non-existence	Preferable

7.5 Comparative Insight: Al-Mutanabbi vs. Al-Ma‘arri

Aspect	Al-Mutanabbi	Al-Ma‘arri
View of Death	Heroic test	Liberation
View of Life	Field of glory	Burden
Tone	Confident	Pessimistic
Goal	Immortality through fame	Escape from existence

8. Ibn Sina: Death as Metaphysical Transition.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037 CE) is considered to be one of the most influential Islamic thinkers, the ideas of which left a significant impact on the development of the Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. In contrast to poetical approaches to death that are based on emotional or existential experience, Ibn Sina treats death in a strictly metaphysical context. Death in his system is not an end, or tragedy but a necessity in the order of being.

8.1 Ontology of Soul and Death

The fundamental idea of the Ibn Sina philosophy is the separation of body (jism) and soul (nafs) as material and immaterial respectively, perishable and eternal respectively. The result of this dualism is the redefinition of death as the opposite of destruction, separation. To Ibn Sina, the human soul is a complete substance, that is not inherent in the body or imprinted in it, and that it survives the death of the body.

Death therefore can be seen as a step between the material and the immaterial, a liberation of the physical restrictions and a reconnecting with the true nature of the soul. Ibn Sina substitutes existential fear with philosophical certainty.

8.2 Poem of the Soul

Ibn Sina does not only present his metaphysical thoughts in a way of prose but he also presents them in poetry. His famous Qaṣīdat al-Nafs قصيدة النفس (Poem of the Soul) provides a symbolic representation of the soul's journey :

هَبَطْتُ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْمَجَلِّ الْأَرْفَعِ
وَرَفَاءُ ذَاتُ تَعَزُّزٍ وَتَمَنُّعٍ

(Ibn Sina, as cited in Amin, 2017, p. 184)
Translation:“It flew to you out of the most high place, A proud and stubborn dove.”
According to van Gelder (2013), the poem

“an interpretation of the old Platonic idea of the human soul: it exists before birth, descends into a body, first longing back for the higher world but eventually returning reluctantly” (pp. 73-74).

The poem is a representation of three levels of ontology: pre-existence (soul is created in higher realm), embodiment (soul enters body), and death (soul goes back to origin). In this way, death is a rebirth and not a conclusion.

8.3 Death as Intellectual Fulfillment

To Ibn Sina, intellectual and spiritual perfection is the final goal of human being. Knowledge, rational comprehension and renunciation of materiality are the means through which the soul is fulfilled. Death, then, is the end of the soul journey and passage to the next level of being. This notion is similar to the Neoplatonic theory, according to which the soul rises to the intellectual world.

8.4 Summary of Ibn Sina's Conception

Stage	Meaning
Pre-existence	Soul originates in higher realm
Embodiment	Soul enters body
Death	Soul returns to origin

9. Sufi Poets: Mystical Union of Death.

9.1 Ibn al-Farid: Death as Union with the Beloved

Of all the mystical expressions of death in Arabic poetry, one of the most polished is that of the "Sultan of Lovers" (Sulṭān al-‘Āshiqīn) Ibn al-Farid (1181–1235 CE). His work is a way of evoking a moment of ecstasy, a moment of union between the lover (the human soul) and the Beloved (God), rather than an ending.

In the context of Ibn al-Farid's *Dīwān*, death is not the end but is rather the ultimate culmination of love. There is in death, in death, the very essence of life, says he in one impressive sentence.

وَلَكِنْ لَدَى الْمَوْتِ فِيهِ ، صَبَابَةٌ ،
"حَيَاةٌ لِمَنْ أَهْوَى ، عَلَى يَدِهَا الْقَضَاُ"

(Ibn al-Farid, *Dīwān*, Dār Şādir ed., p. 134).

Translation: In death, for me, there is a longing—a life I love and by which I am graced.

Here death is not death, but the very source of true life, Life in the Beloved. It's the poet's claim of superiority (al-faḍl) via death because death brings him nearer to what he loves.

Then, in another verse, death is portrayed as a welcoming embrace, a haven from the fear of being separated:

وَإِنِّي ، إِلَى التَّهْدِيدِ بِالْمَوْتِ ، رَاكِبٌ ،
وَلَمْ تَعْصِفِي بِالْقَتْلِ نَفْسِي؟ بَلْ لَهَا
"بِهِ تَعْقِلُ" ، إِنَّ أَتْلَفْتُ مِنْهَاجِي

(Ibn al-Farid, *Dīwān*, Dār Şādir ed., p. 56).

Translation: "With death I am inclined, with death I lean, O LORD, why do you afflict my soul with death? But my soul is secure in death; for he is in the presence of those who know him.

The poet is not afraid of death, he leans towards death. Death is not an enemy, but a protector, a secure keeper of the soul. The words "even if you destroy my path" indicate that all that is important in the world is nothing when measured in comparison to union through death.

Ibn al-Farid then goes on to talk of the death as a testimony (shahādah) — a martyrdom of love:

وَدُونَ إِتِهَامِي إِنْ قَضَيْتُ أَمِي فَمَا
أَمْسَأْتُ بِنَفْسِي ، بِالشَّهَادَةِ ، أَمِيرُ
لِي مِنْكَ كَافٍ إِنْ هَدَرْتُ دَمِي ، وَلَمْ
"أَعُدْ شَهِيدًا ، عَلَّمَ دَاعِي مَبِيتِي"

(Ibn al-Farid, *Dīwān*, Dār Şādir ed., 56).

I am not blamed if I die because I have not done wrong to myself, but if You pour out my blood [upon the earth] and I am not counted a martyr, I, know the name of the One who calls my death.

Even his blood is "shed" unjustly, it is a sacrifice that the poet gladly takes. He does not desire any recognition in the world, but is aware of the inner caller (dā'ī manīyyatī) calling him to his preordained encounter with the Beloved. Death turns into a private and intimate celebration.

The metamorphosis is so complete that death itself is beauty and life:

صَارَتْ جَمَالِي دُكَا مِنْ هَيْبَةِ الْمُتَجَلِّي
وَلَاخَ سِرِّ خَفِيٍّ يَذْرِيه مَنْ كَانَ مُشْكِلِي
فَالْمَوْتُ فِيهِ حَيَاتِي ، وَفِي جَسَانِي قَتْلِي

(Ibn al-Farid, *Dīwān*, Dār Ṣādir ed, 176).

Translation: "My beauty is dust when I see the awe of the Self-Manifesting One, and a secret appeared, one known only to those who see my perplexity, Death is my life, and in my reckoning is my death.

This is a most extraordinary verse that sums up the totality of Ibn al-Farid's mystical ontology of death. Divine majesty drives the beauty of the ego away to dust. A secret hidden is only known to the perplexed (*mushkilī*), those who have surpassed the normal understanding and reason. The last line is a final paradox: Death is life, and what the world calls "reckoning" (*ḥisānī*) accountability, judgment — is death itself. Once the ego is destroyed, then is the beginning of true life.

Finally, Ibn al-Farid says that death is the time when the soul is freed from divine judgment and is immersed in pure love:

سَلِّمْهُمْ مُسْتَخِيرًا أَنْفُسَهُمْ : هَلْ نَجَتْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ مِنْ قَبْضِي؟
"فَالْقَضَا مَا بَيْنَ سُخْطِي وَالرِّضَى ، مَنْ لَهُ أَقْصَى قَضَى ، أَوْ أَدْنَى حَيِّ"

(Ibn al-Farid, *Dīwān*, Dār Ṣādir ed., p. 17).

Translation: "Ask them, ask them about their souls: Have their souls, their souls, slipped away from me? For divine decree is between my wrath and my pleasure. Whoever has the farthest [decree] has died, or the nearest is alive."

This is the representation of death as the soul's release from divine "grasp" (judgment. Between wrath (*sukhrī*) and pleasure (*riḍā*) there is suspense of love. The farthest decree (*aqṣā qadā*) is death and then the soul is liberated.

9.2 The mystical ontology of death in Ibn al-Farid.

Ibn al-Farid's meaning from the verses of his authenticated *Dīwān* (Dār Ṣādir edition), based on which he can be summarized as follows:

Concept	Explanation
Death as Life	True life starts only after death of the ego. There is no extinction but the transition from the world to real life in the Beloved, death is that.
Death as Refuge	The poet proactively leans towards death. Death is that which saves the soul and guards it against fear of disconnection.

Concept	Explanation
Death as Testimony	In death, the lover is a private martyr, and feels the internal voice that calls him to union as a joy.
Death as Liberation	Death releases the soul from the condemnatory judgement of the Divine and brings it to the state of pure love from wrath and pleasure.

Unlike previous traditions that had death associated with fear (pre-Islamic poetry), courage (al-Mutanabbī) or transition (Ibn Sīnā), death is presented as life itself in the Sufi poetry of Ibn al-Farid. Now death is not something to be feared, but something to be desired. The self is dissolved, the counting is over, and the lover lives forever in the Beloved.

9.3 Al-Hallaj's Conception:Death as the Birth of Eternal Life

Al-Hallaj (858–922 CE)is a Sufi thinker who was one of the most radical. His concept of death goes further giving it as the prerequisite to real existence. Irfani (1998) mentioned Al-Hallaj as the "**martyr of Love**" and the story of Al-Hallaj as one of the dismantling of human self-confidence and spiritual self-sacrifice. The same source notes that his punishment included being "**publicly flogged five hundred lashes, stoned by believers in the city square, and then raised on a cross**" (Irfani, 1998, p. 93).

اقْتُلُونِي يَا نَفَاتِي إِنَّ فِي قَتْلِي حَيَاتِي
وَمَمَاتِي فِي حَيَاتِي وَحَيَاتِي فِي مَمَاتِي

Translation: “Kill me, my beloved friends, in my death is my life; my death is my life, my life is my death.” (Al-Hallāj, 2002, p. 125).

This verse speaks of a great mystical paradox that death is life, annihilation is fulfillment, loss is realization. This is an expression of the essence of Sufi philosophy of fanā’ (annihilation of the self) into baqā’ (eternal existence in God).

9.4 The Idea of Fanā’.

The concept of death in Sufi poetry revolves around fanā. It is the annihilation of ego, disappearance of individual identity and being assimilated into divine reality. The Sufi is trying to die before death and annihilate the self in order to achieve eternal life in God.

9.5 Aesthetic Expression of Mystical Death

Sufi poetry is full of symbolic language that is used to convey the feeling of death. Key symbols include:

- الحب (love) → way to death.
- الخمر (wine) → divine intoxication
- الغناء (annihilation) → spiritual fulfillment
- النور (light) → divine presence

9.5 Summary of Sufi Conception

Stage	Meaning
Pre-Islamic	Chaos and fear
Classical (Al-Mutanabbi)	Heroic confrontation
Philosophical (Ibn Sina)	Metaphysical transition
Sufi (Ibn al-Farid, Al-Hallaj)	Mystical union and annihilation

10. Aesthetic Structures of Death in Arabic Poetry.

Whereas ontology determines what death is, aesthetics is what defines how death is portrayed, lived and expressed in a poetic manner. In the Arabic poetry, the image of death is not simply a description of a factual event, but a multifaceted aesthetic phenomenon created through the use of imagery, symbolism and rhetorical techniques.

10.1 Symbolism of Death

One of the most basic aesthetic elements employed by Arabic poets to symbolize death in an indirect way is symbolism. Poets do not mention death directly but use symbolic constructions that suggest the existence of death. Common symbols include:

Symbol	Meaning
الليل (night)	Death, finality
الصحراء (desert)	Emptiness, extinction
الأطلال (ruins)	Decay, memory
الغروب (sunset)	End of life
الطير (bird)	Soul, transcendence

10.2 Metaphor and Imagery

Aesthetic construction of death revolves around metaphor. Arabic poets often employ death in figurative contexts where they change the meaning of death. Common metaphors include:

- Death as a pilgrimage (rihla).

- Death as drowsiness (nawm)
- Death is liberation (taḥarrur)
- Death as marriage (wiṣāl).

10.3 Paradox and Irony

One of the main aesthetic characteristics is paradox, particularly, in philosophical and Sufi poetry. It gives the poets the chance to convey intricate and conflicting meanings. The most notable one is the paradox of Al-Hallaj:

إِنَّ فِي قَتْلِي حَيَاتِي

Translation: "In my death I have life.

This paradox conveys what can not be described in terms of logical language only, i.e., that death and life are not antipodes but two distinct forms of the same thing. Irfani mentioned(1998) Al-Hallaj as *"the 'martyr of Love'"* (Irfani, 1998, p. 93).

and his tale is "one of unhinging human self-assurance and spiritual selflessness".

(Irfani, 1998, p. 93).

10.4 Incorporation of Aesthetic Elements

The aesthetic depiction of death is a result of the combination of various factors:

Element	Function
Symbolism	Indirect meaning
Metaphor	Conceptual transformation
Imagery	Sensory experience
Paradox	Philosophical depth

According to Ahmadzadeh Houch et al. (2022), poets "used aesthetic, temporal, spatial and collocations codes to produce poetic symbols related to the concept of death" (Ahmadzadeh Houch et al., 2022, p. 85).

This inter-dimensional understanding of creating symbols shows "the poet's main purpose, ideology and contradictory feelings about death, which are incomprehensible in the first reading and uncovering the secondary layers of the text" (p. 85).

Collectively, these components form a multi-layered image of death that takes a common and frequently dreaded phenomenon and makes it a multidimensional and rich experience.

11. Discussion: Towards a Systematic Understanding

The above discussion shows that death in Arabic poetic and philosophical traditions is not a fixed or unchanging thing but one that is dynamic and changing. Throughout the historical periods and intellectual systems, the meaning, role and representation of death change greatly.

11.1 Existential Anxiety to Philosophical Reflection

Among the most noteworthy trends is the transformation of death as an existential phenomenon as in the pre-Islamic poetry to a philosophical concept in subsequent traditions. Death in pre-Islamic poetry is depicted as chaotic, unpredictable, immediate in terms of emotion. The poet feels that death is something outside and interferes with the life and generates existential anxiety. But as the Abbasid intellectual culture grew, death is more internalized or conceptualized. Philosophical influences help poets to redefine death in well-organized ontological structures.

The prophet Muhammad stated that the most true saying of a poet is that of Labid:
"ألا كل شيء ما خلا الله باطل" (Sahih Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 3841).

This pre-Islamic verse already had a great philosophical revelation that pre-empted developments in ontology.

11.2 Divergent Philosophical Positions

The theme of the juxtaposition between Al-Mutanabbi and Al-Maarri presents a key point of comparison. Al-Mutanabbi embraces death and turns it into heroic statement, and wants to be immortalized by fame. As Abdul-Hamid and Wheale (2002) say, the most renowned line of Al-Mutanabbi was:

"Horses, night and the desert know me, and the sword, spear, paper and pen"

expresses this wish to live on through language. Al-Maarri, however, denies existence, perceives death as freedom and refutes the purpose of life. Al-Maakarri has been described as **"a pessimistic freethinker"** and his self-written epitaph reads:

"this was the crime my father committed to me and I have done so to no one" (Grigoryan, 2018, p. 225)

This opposition shows that death is not a predetermined notion but it is influenced by personal philosophical position, intellectual and existential orientation. Death therefore is a reflection of the poet as a mirror of his interpretation of the world.

11.3 Ibn Sina and the Rationalization of Death

This philosophical work of Ibn Sina initiates a pivotal change towards the poetic intuition to a systemic metaphysical reasoning. Death in his model is the separation of body and soul, the soul is immortal and continuity of existence. According to Druart (2000),

"As for Avicenna the human soul is a complete substance which does not inhere in the body nor is imprinted in it" (p. 259).

This view does away with existential doubt by offering ontological certainty, metaphysical order and intellectual confidence. The rationalization turns death into an object of fear to a mandatory phase of hierarchy of being.

11.4 The Sufi Transformation

The ultimate reshaping of death is in Sufi poetry, where it is a mystical union. In Ibn al-Farid and Al-Hallaj, death is union with God, annihilation is fulfilment, and loss is realisation. Irfani (1998) indicates that Al-Hallaj is the so-called “**martyr of Love**”, whose story is.

"one of unhinging human self-assurance and spiritual selflessness" (p. 93).

His well-known paradox In my death is my life reflects the essence of Sufi teaching that self destruction results in eternal life in God. This phase is the climax of the development of the concept of death in Arabic philosophy.

The Evolution of Death in Arabic Poetry:

Stage	Period	Representative	Meaning of Death
1	Pre-Islamic	Zuhayr, Labid, Al-Khansa	Fear, chaos, inevitability
2	Classical	Al-Mutanabbi	Heroic test, courage
3	Philosophical	Al-Ma‘arri	Liberation, negation
4	Metaphysical	Ibn Sina	Transition, return
5	Mystical	Ibn al-Farid, Al-Hallaj	Union, annihilation

11.5 Death as Aesthetic Construction

In addition to ontology, this paper evidences that aesthetic structures are crucial in shaping death. Poets have made death a very sensuous and emotional experience through use of symbolism, metaphor, imagery and paradox. Ahmadzadeh Hoch et al. (2022) claim that poets.

it uses aesthetic, temporal, spatial and collocations codes to create poetic symbols of the idea of death, so that the poet presents his primary aim, ideology and complex emotions towards death, which cannot be fully understood in the initial reading.

"used aesthetic, temporal, spatial and collocations codes to produce poetic symbols related to the concept of death", (Ahmadzadeh Houch et al., 2022, p. 85). revealing "the poet's main purpose, ideology and contradictory feelings about death, which are incomprehensible in the first reading" . (Ahmadzadeh Houch et al., 2022, p. 85).

The following aesthetic devices enable death to be experienced, envisioned and internalized, as opposed to being cognized on the intellectual plane.

11.6 Integration of Ontology and Aesthetics

The main theoretical contribution of the research is the fact that ontology and aesthetics are closely related. Ontology describes what death is and aesthetics describes how death is lived. They all constitute a single structure whereby death is a philosophy and a poetry. The given integration is a major contribution to the comprehension of how the Arabic poetic thought answers the most profound questions of human existence.

12. Conclusion

This paper has explored the issue of death in Arabic poetry and philosophy in a composite paradigm comprising of ontology and aesthetics. The analysis shows how death in Arab philosopher-poets is not a fixed or singular phenomenon but a dynamic and evolving phenomenon depending on historical, intellectual and cultural contexts.

In pre-Islamic poetry, death appears as a real, existential, and unpredictable, universal and emotional fact. The poetry of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, introduces death as a blind, chaotic element, whereas the poetry of Labid ibn Rabi'a brings a more thoughtful attitude, which will lead to the philosophical developments in the future. The elegy of Al-Khansa shows how death can be an on-going experience incorporated into everyday life.

As classical Arabic poetry came into existence especially in the works of Al-Mutanabbi and Al-Ma'arri, death has become transformed. Al-Mutanabbi reinvents death as a location of heroic claim, where honor and bravery give significance to life. His well-known poems make death not a dreadful end but a gauge of human greatness. Al-Ma'arri, by contrast, is a radical philosopher, perceiving death as the release of the strains of existence, and doubting the existence of existence itself. His negative vision is one of the extreme ontological stands of Arabic thought.

Philosophical system of Ibn Sina is a turning point towards metaphysical clarity. Declaring death to be the loss of the soul and body and the immortality of the soul, he makes death an ontological need and a phase in the continuity of the existence. Poem of the Soul (قصيدة النفس) employs a bird to signify how the soul descends into the body, and how it comes back to its divine source. This logical system removes existential ambiguity and gives a systematic view on life and death.

In Sufi poetry, the idea of death is transformed to the utmost degree. Ibn al-Farid, known as the "Sultan of Lovers," reinterprets death as union with the Beloved. His poetry changes the experience of death into a divine love. Al-Hallaj goes further to offer death as the requisite of true life. The essence of Sufi teaching of fanà (annihilation of the self) which results in baqaa (eternal existence in God) can be found in his paradoxical statement: In my death is my life.

In addition to these ontological changes, this paper has demonstrated that aesthetic structures are fundamental in shaping death. Arabic poets use symbolism, metaphor, imagery, and paradox to turn death into the sensual and emotional feast. These figurative devices enable us to experience, envision and internalize death, not just abstractly.

The main contribution of the research is the fact that ontology and aesthetics are closely intertwined throughout the Arabic poetic thought. Death is a philosophical idea and a poetic creation at the same time, and its definition is created by the interplay

between these two aspects. In addition, death is also used as epistemological instrument where poets can enquire on the basic questions of existence, identity and transcendence.

To sum up, death among Arab philosopher-poets is not a dead end but a metamorphosis that can show the richness and variety of Arabic intellectual and literary traditions. It develops into existential anxiety, philosophical reflection and finally to mystical transcendence. This development shows how Arabic poetry is able to make one of the most complicated human phenomena into a beautiful aesthetic and intellectual experience. Future studies can also conduct comparative views especially the connection between Arabic and other philosophic-poetic traditions in order to gain a better insight into the concept of death as a universal and yet a culturally situated phenomenon.

References

- Abdul-Hamid, W., & Wheale, N. (2002). Impossible traces: Translating the Sayfiyat of Abu Tayyib al-Mutanabbī. *PN Review*, 28(4). Retrieved from https://pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=1177
- Ahmadzadeh Hoch, P., Aghazadeh Qayeh Bashi, B., & Kheyri, V. (2022). Analysis of the concept of death in Bassam Hajar's poetry based on Peirce semiotic model. *Journal of Arabic Language and Literature*, 14(2), 85–106. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jalit.2021.321797.612376>
- Al-Bukhari, M. i. I. (n.d.). The most truthful word spoken by a poet. In *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Book of the Merits of al-Ansar, Hadith 3841). Retrieved from <https://shamela.ws/book/660/8383>
- Al-Ḥallāj, Ḥ. M. (2002). *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj wa-ma'ahu akhbār al-Ḥallāj wa-kitāb al-tawāsīn* (M. B. 'Uyūn al-Sūd, Ed.). Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah. (Original work published 309 AH / 922 CE)
- Al-Hashimi, A. I. (n.d.). *Jawahir al-adab fi adabiyat wa insha lughat al-Arab* (Vol. 2). Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Ma'arif.
- Aliyev, C. (2024). Al-Mutanabbi, the renowned 10th-century Arab poet: Insights from Eastern and Western scholars' research. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum*. <https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.024046>
- Al-Jamal, H. A. (2004). *Death in Abbasid poetry between 332 H – 450 H* (Master's thesis). An-Najah National University. Retrieved from <https://repository.najah.edu/items/43824256-190c-4cc7-b7e9-f604b18e1a09>
- Al-Ma'arri, A. (n.d.). *Luzūmiyyāt*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Mutanabbi, A. T. A. (1866). *Diwan e Mutanabbi Mahsha*. Bandar Hugli. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361417>
- Al-Muhallabi, A. A. (2003). Al-ma'ākhidh 'alā shurrāḥ dīwān Abī al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī (A. N. al-Mānī', Ed.; 2nd ed., Vol. 2). Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. <https://shamela.ws/book/37057/520> (Original work composed before 644 AH / 1246 CE)
- Anam, M. A. (2023). Kesia-siaan eksistensi: Makna kehidupan menurut pesimisme klasik Abū al-'Alā al-Ma'arri. *Refleksi: Jurnal Filsafat dan Pemikiran Keislaman*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.v23i1.3957>
- Amin, A. (2017). 'Ayniyyat Ibn Sīnā. In *Fayḍ al-khātir* (Vol. 9, p. 184). Hindawi Foundation. <https://www.hindawi.org/books/79181852/45/>
- Cohen-Mor, D. (2013). Fathers and sons in poetry and politics. In *Fathers and sons in the Arab Middle East* (p. 139). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137335203_5
- Druart, T. A. (2000). The human soul's individuation and its survival after the body's death: Avicenna on the causal relation between body and soul. *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 10(2), 259–273. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0957423900000102>
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Al-Ma'arri*. Retrieved December 31, 2025, from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/al-Maarri>
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. (1995). Ibn al-Farid. In *Merriam-Webster's encyclopedia of literature*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ibn-al-Farid>
- Ghnaim, F., Alkhawaja, L., Khoury, O., & Alomary, A. (2024). Exploring al-Mutanabbi's poetic duality: Ego exaltation and model defiance in "My heart is a flame." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(6). <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1506.35>
- Grigoryan, S. (2018). *Poetics of ambivalence in al-Ma'arri's Luzūmiyyāt and the question of freethinking* (Doctoral dissertation). Central European University, Budapest.

- Retrieved from https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2018/grigoryan_sona.pdf
- Homerin, T. E. (2012). *Passion before me, my fate behind: Ibn al-Farid and the poetry of recollection*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ibn al-Farid, U. (n.d.). *Dīwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ*. Beirut: Dār Şādir.
- Institute of Ismaili Studies. (2015). *New publication explores facets of esoteric traditions*. Retrieved from <https://www.iis.ac.uk/news/2015/november/new-publication-explores-facets-of-esoteric-traditions/>
- Irfani, S. (1998). Review essay: The enigma of Hallaj [Review of the book *Al-Hallaj*, by H. W. Mason]. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 15(2), 131–134. <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v15i2.2178>
- Karimi, A. (2014). Analysis of absurdity of life in viewpoint of Abul Ala Ma'arri. *MAGNT Research Report*, 2(7), 231–237. Retrieved from <https://profdoc.um.ac.ir/articles/a/1046774.pdf>
- Labid ibn Rabi'a. (n.d.). *Mu'allāqa* (Lines 1–2). Retrieved from <https://shamela.ws/book/17791/2510>
- Schwartz, D. (2014). Avicenna and Maimonides on immortality: A comparative study. In *Medieval and modern perspectives on Muslim–Jewish relations*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315077666-13>
- Sellman, J. (2019, December 13). Al-Mutanabbi's ode to Sayf al-Dawlah or al-Mutanabbi's eulogy for those whose deaths were fated. Arabic 2241: Contemporary Arab Cultures. <https://u.osu.edu/arabic2241/2019/12/13/al-mutanabbis-ode-to-sayf-al-dawlah-or-al-mutanabbis-eulogy-for-those-whose-deaths-were-fated/>
- van Gelder, G. J. (2013). There descended to you: A philosophical allegory by Ibn Sīnā. In *Classical Arabic literature: A library of Arabic literature anthology* (pp. 73–74). New York: NYU Press.
- Younus, S. H. (2024). Identification in divine love poetry: Ibn al-Faridh as a model. *Al-Noor Journal for Humanitarian Studies*, 1(2), 131–152. Retrieved from <https://iasj.net/iasj/export/314694>
- Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma. (n.d.). *Mu'allāqa* (Lines 53–54). Retrieved from https://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/معلقة_زهير_بن_أبي_سلمى